

How can I find out the results of my baby's screening tests?

If you have questions about the results from your baby's screening tests, please contact your health care provider. If your health care provider does not have the results, he or she should contact the Newborn Screening Program to obtain a copy.



As a parent, may I refuse to have these tests done?

The law gives parents the right to refuse the screening tests for their baby if this testing conflicts with their religious beliefs or practices. If this is true for you, be sure to tell the hospital staff or your health care provider.



Where can I get more information about newborn screening?

For more information, talk with your health care provider or contact the Newborn Screening Program using the information provided on the front of this pamphlet.



Additional Information

There is only one charge per infant for the screening. Additional specimens are tested at no additional charge. However, your health care provider may charge a fee to collect the specimen. Diagnostic testing, if needed, will involve additional costs.

This pamphlet is available in: Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Laotian, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

For people with disabilities, this pamphlet is available in an alternative format on request. To submit a request please call 1-866-660-9050.

Newborn screening specimens are currently retained in secure storage by the Department of Health for 21 years. Use of identifiable samples for any other purpose is prohibited without prior written, informed consent of parents or legal guardians (Washington State Uniform Health Care Information Act: Chapter 70.02 RCW). If you have questions, please contact the Newborn Screening Program (see front of pamphlet).

Newborn Screening Tests & Your Baby



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What is newborn screening?

Newborn screening is a way to identify babies who are at risk for serious disorders that are treatable, but not apparent at birth. State law requires that all babies born in Washington be tested for four disorders before they are discharged from the hospital (Chapter 70.83 RCW). Although the law applies to babies born in hospitals, it is important that babies born outside of a hospital receive the same quality of care.



Why is testing important?

This testing identifies disorders that, if not detected and treated, can result in mental retardation, severe illness or even death. A newborn baby may look perfectly healthy but still have a serious disorder. Finding these problems early and treating them promptly prevents many serious complications. Fortunately, treatment is available to prevent or greatly reduce the effects of these disorders.

Newborn screening tests are one important way to provide your baby with the best possible health care. A simple blood test can give you and your baby's health care provider information about your baby's health that you may not otherwise know.

How is testing done?

All tests are done from a few drops of blood taken from your baby's heel. The blood is collected on a special absorbent paper and sent to the State Public Health Newborn Screening Laboratory in Shoreline for testing. The hospital or health care provider that submitted the specimen is notified of the results within a few days.



What disorders are detected in Washington State?

All babies are tested for the following four disorders:

Phenylketonuria (PKU)

Congenital Hypothyroidism

Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia

Hemoglobinopathies (including sickle cell disease)



When should testing be done?

The law requires that the first specimen be collected before hospital discharge, but no later than 5 days of age. This allows affected infants to be treated as soon as possible. The routine second specimen should be collected between 7 and 14 days of age, but it is still beneficial for older babies. Additional testing should also be done when requested by your baby's health care provider.

Why are two specimens recommended?

Most of the disorders will be detected on the first specimen, even if taken on the day of birth. The second specimen is recommended because some disorders may not be detected until the baby is slightly older.

Sometimes more than two specimens may be requested. The most common reason for requesting an additional specimen is that the previous results were inconclusive.

A request for another specimen does not mean your baby has one of the disorders.



What happens if a disorder is suspected?

If the newborn screening test indicates a possible problem, your baby's health care provider will be contacted immediately. Further testing will be recommended so treatment can be started rapidly if your baby is affected with one of the disorders.